

# The Ballarat Naturalist

February 2007



Trailing Goodenia  
*Goodenia lanata*  
(Club Logo)

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## **The Activities of the Ballarat Environment Network Speaker: Hedley Thomson**

Hedley was recently appointed part-time Secretary and Executive Officer of BEN to increase its profile in the community. BEN was created from the Ballarat Region Conservation Strategy of 1990 and established in 1992, initially as an umbrella organisation to enable the various local conservation and environmental groups to co-ordinate their activities. It is a community, not-for-profit organisation which is managed by a committee and various working groups. It owns Ballarat Biodiversity Services which is a company making money and thus providing an independent income stream to BEN. This supplements grants and enables BEN to look after the reserves it manages, which are areas of Crown land with remnant vegetation needing work such as weed control, burning, fencing etc. The area it covers is expanding to cover much of SW Victoria, so a name change may be imminent!

BEN's working groups include Biodiversity, Events and Publicity. Speaking with one voice on behalf of its affiliated groups, it now creates major submissions to enquiries, debates with MPs on election issues, raises awareness, promotes improvements in the local environment and aims to extend interest in issues by means of conferences and awards. It has a quarterly newsletter "Running Postman", issues press releases, takes action on Reserves and runs LINCS (i.e. the Yarrowee corridor) under contract to Ballarat Council with funding from Corangamite CMA. Federal funding has also been available.

Ballarat Biodiversity Services' clients include businesses, government agencies, community groups and landowners. The company undertakes flora and fauna surveys, weed spraying, fencing, property management, education, and operates an indigenous plant nursery which was set up 5 years ago initially to provide suitable vegetation for rehabilitating the Yarrowee Creek.

BBS employees include Tim D'Ombrian, Roger Thomas and 3 botanists, a Reserves manager, casual works staff, a LINCS co-ordinator, Hedley Thomson for publicity and business planning; it owns equipment including vehicles and provides training in equipment use and knowledge of flora.

The Reserves program was initiated by Tim and aims to protect the region's

unique and threatened biodiversity assets; to involve local committees in protection and management and to provide a platform and basis for development of the Ballarat Region Biodiversity Web. It has taken on work which DSE was unable to carry out. Where local committees were unable to maintain reserve management, BEN has been able to take over the job.

The Reserves are spread over a wide area, from Mt Doran to Bannockburn, Beaufort, and Cressy, 58 all told either existing or proposed. Their size varies from 6000m<sup>2</sup> to 105ha. They include a mixture of environments, from grassy woodlands to wetlands and basalt plains. Why are they there? Their past use is the clue: some have been water reserves, recreation reserves, night soil dumps, gravel quarries, mines and rail reserves. Most of these functions date from the gold mining era and are often very disturbed. The original population has vanished, management has lapsed and with no use, the vegetation has regrown.

However there are several issues affecting many of the localities: weeds such as gorse, pines; illegal access by bikes and 4WDs, dumping of rubbish, boundary definition, fire concerns and the threats of “improvement” by those who see them as “unused” areas. Frequently they are islands surrounded by pasture and don’t need a lot of work. Vegetation includes eucalypts, acacias, sheoaks, grasses, shrubs, flowering plants and aquatic plants.

Hedley illustrated his talk with images of some of the reserves such as Haddon, Newtown Cricket Ground, Skipton Common, Flagstaff Hill and the Rainbow Bird Trail developed by Tim which links Dereel and Berringa.

Immediate plans for BEN include the production of a Guidebook to the reserves (on the lines of our *Discovering Ballarat’s Bushland* book), removal of woody weeds, fencing, a tours program and a Green Schools program. Information can be gained from the website [www.bird.net.au](http://www.bird.net.au).



### **Christmas BBQ**

A Christmas function was held on Friday 15 December 2006 at the home of Carol Hall. On a pleasant evening the members attended and enjoyed a BBQ with shared salads and sweets. Guests included friends of Alison and John Williams from the United Kingdom adding an international interest to the discussions. Thanks to Carol for opening her home.

*Group enjoying the pleasant evening.*

## **Excursion: Ballarat Environmental Network (BEN) Biodiversity Reserves December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2006**

Leader: Tim D'Ombra

As a sequel to Hedley Thomson's presentation at the December club meeting six reserves were visited. This excursion revealed an exciting cross-section of reserves that varied greatly in size, terrain and types of plant.

We were very fortunate to have as our leader Tim D'Ombra who has been highly involved in assessing many unused and neglected Crown land blocks for inclusion in the Biodiversity Reserve scheme and consequently under BEN management. Some forty reserves deemed worthy of preservation have been included.

Those visited are located south-west of Ballarat.

**Stop 1.** Nintingbool Water Reserve: NNE of Smythesdale, near the headwaters of the Woody Yaloak Creek. Comprising wetland, grassland and wooded section with Candlebark, Scentbark and Peppermints on the rises. In an old-growth Candlebark is an eagle's substantial nest platform. Effective mulching of a heavy gorse infestation as primary grooming has provided opportunity for ongoing control methods and a great variety of plants were evident. These include Poa (basalt plains form) Rush spp. (Pale & Spiny), Water Ribbons and Poison Lobelia.

**Stop 2.** Hillcrest-Sugarloaf Reserve: north of Scarsdale off Phillips Rd. via Tannery Rd. Normally a wet reserve, it was showing regrowth following fire in late autumn, with profuse seedling growth of Swamp Gum, Scentbark and Candlebark. In depressions in heathland areas were a variety of Rushes including Branched Rush. Chocolate Lilies were flowering as were Small Grass Trees in impressive displays. A small area of burnt Woolly Wattle was shooting amongst Blackwood regrowth.

The temperature increased and Grey Shrike-thrush and Rufous Whistler began calling. A Brown Falcon was observed at close quarters during the drive to the reserve. A Chough's nest was conspicuous amongst the epicormic growth on a burnt eucalypt – with a distinct terra cotta appearance!

**Stop 3.** Moonie's Dam Reserve: north of Scarsdale on Moonie's Rd via Tannery Rd. Formerly a mining dam on a tributary of the Woody Yaloak Creek it contained, in spite of drought conditions, a body of healthy water stretching some 800 metres. Eel weed was evident. Lunch break was taken overlooking the northern end of the dam and fourteen species of bird were recorded including Whistling Kite and Marsh Harrier, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Pacific and White-faced Herons.

There is a bordering grassland and a woodland with old-growth Yarra Gums and a shrubland understorey. In depressions (gilgai) amongst the Prickly Tea-tree and Prickfoot were wetland plants.

**Stop 4.** Newtown Recreation Reserve: on east side of Lismore-Scarsdale Rd. The former sports oval on the edge of the basalt plain is reverting to a natural

grassland with a good cover of Kangaroo Grass. The eastern section is of forest on rising ground with Scentbark and Manna Gum.

**Stop 5.** *Springdallah Water Production Reserve*: west side of Lismore-Scarsdale Rd, north of Cape Clear. An open grassland area between the road and adjoining paddocks, with a dam still holding water. Blue Devil, Common Everlasting, Scaly Buttons, native St. John's Wort, Sneezeweed, Prickfoot, Small Loosestrife, and Kangaroo Grass were present. Ceramic roofing tiles were observed laid out in a grid pattern as shelter for reptiles as part of a Legless Lizard survey.

**Stop 6.** *Berringa Night Soil Reserve*: on Salvo Ben Rd, Berringa. A small but impressive block of diverse vegetation with open woodland and forest species. Red Stringybark, Scentbark, Narrow-leaved Peppermint and Hedge Wattle were noted and members agreed that this is an area with potential of a lengthy species list in better seasons. Kookaburra, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Crimson Rosella were observed during the brief inspection.

**Final Stop.** *Berringa Reservoir Sanctuary Reserve*. A late afternoon refreshment stop was called at this reserve before the return journey to Ballarat. At this stage bird life was becoming more active and a walk around the dam provided sightings of species not encountered during the day, viz. Pacific Black Duck, Grey Fantail, Superb Fairy Wren, Red Wattle Bird, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. White-naped Honeyeaters were observed as they were building a nest in a drooping clump of eucalypt leaves approx. 12 metres above the ground.



Because of the scope of the day's programme this is but a summary report, but hopefully it will act as a reminder that these BEN reserves will provide excellent venues for fieldwork in the future.

Tim's enthusiastic and comprehensive commentary throughout the day was greatly appreciated.

Details of access and descriptions of the Reserves may be found on the website [www.bird.org.au](http://www.bird.org.au)

Greg Binns.



## Book Review

### **Flora of the Otway Plain and Ranges Vol. 1**

Author: Enid Mayfield

Publisher: Linton Press, Geelong Botanic Gardens. \$45.

This first volume deals with Orchids, Irises, Lilies, Grass-trees, Mat-Rushes, and other petaloid monocotyledons.

This is a most attractively produced book. The cover itself gives a clue to what lies inside – some of the clearest botanical illustrations I have seen. After a foreword by John Landy, the Quick Plant Finder enables a search by common name, scientific name and family. Then follows a key system entitled “What flower is this?” and there is an illustrated list of the characteristics of families. An explanation of the characteristics of petaloid monocotyledons and their evolution clarifies the story for this non-botanist reviewer, and then the individual descriptions begin.

For each plant there is a translation of its botanical name, its location within the Otway region and elsewhere in Australia and the world, its habitat, habit, status and time of flowering. Best of all are the wonderful annotated illustrations, with detailed paintings of the tiny parts of a plant which are diagnostic. Did you know that *Thelymitra* orchids are identified by their columns? There is a double page spread matching flower to column – 23 species are illustrated. Arrangements of calli on the labellum of an orchid are shown where they are diagnostic. Details of Greenhood orchids show the various positions of the sepals and the nature of the “hood”. Leaf characteristics of a plant may be illustrated by cross-section or close-up of the surface. Seeds, ovaries, stamens and anthers all get the treatment. For each plant, descriptions are given for Rootstock, Leaves, Flower Stem, Flowers, Stamens, Fruit and Recognition.

Extra information such as the impact of fire, insect pollinators, the role of mycorrhizal fungi, and food value to indigenous peoples round out the ecological context in which these plants grow and add valuable interest.

Finally there is a bibliography, an illustrated glossary – again helpful to the non-botanist - and an index.

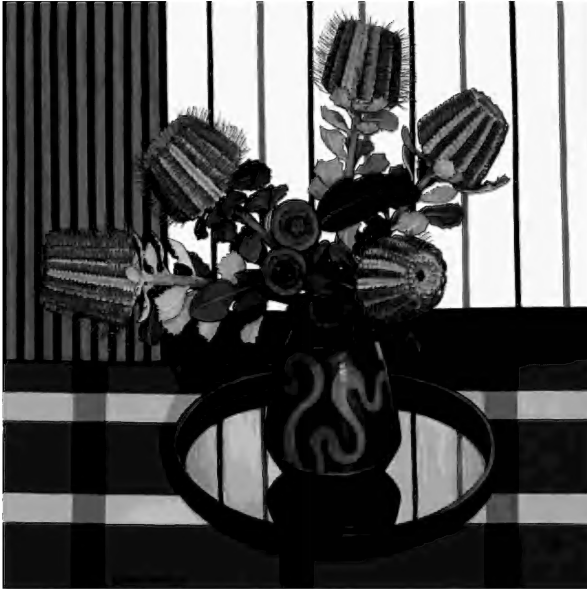
This limp cover book is a handy size for use in the field but fits the daypack rather than the pocket. It is much more than just a field identification manual and would appeal to specialist and enthusiast alike.

Reviewer: Carol Hall

## Exhibitions at the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery

### Kalianthi: the Art of Criss Canning

This exhibition opens on Friday Feb 6 and continues to May 13.



This is a major retrospective of Criss Canning's work ranging from her student days up to the works of her maturity. Criss Canning's works are celebrations of beauty as well as being explorations of colour as manifested by the natural world in flowers and fruits along with man made objects.

Criss Canning  
*Banksias & Gumnuts* 2004  
Private Collection

**Field & Flora in Art—Enid Mayfield**  
Opens January 20 and continues to March

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Enid Mayfield is a botanical artist who enjoys a high reputation for her exact and exquisite scientific illustrations. This series of botanical illustrations are a glimpse of the Otway region's flora and insect life. Included in the exhibition is an explanation of how the illustrations are produced using microscope, rulers, sketches and keen observation. The illustrations are just beautiful.

Enid Mayfield  
*Common Fringe Lily*  
*Thysanotus tuberosus subspecies tuberosus* 2003  
Watercolour on paper



Thanks to Peter Freund for drawing these exhibitions to our attention.



## **FNC Ballarat Minutes of General Meeting December 1 2006**

### **Correspondence –IN**

John Gregurke and Greg Binns both received material on the Canadian Valley Outline Development Plan (affecting Mt Helen/ Mt Clear) as they had put in submissions. There is a public hearing re the Ballarat Planning Scheme Amendment Act on December 5<sup>th</sup> 6.45pm in the Trench Room, Ballarat Town Hall. Further submissions can be made until mid December .

**Business Arising from Correspondence:** Peter Dalman to write to an appropriate group expressing concern at development proposals for the Mallacoota coastline outlined in GreenNet.

### **Reports**

*Treasurer's Report:* -Opening Balance: \$4387.43 Closing balance: \$ 4272.13

### **General Business**

Syllabus planning well under way; NB April 2007 meeting is on 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday due to Good Friday being on the 1<sup>st</sup> one.

2007 Club campout confirmed for May 25-27 at Star of the Sea Convent, Apollo Bay.

Presentation by Ern Perkins who has printed off all Pat Murphy's plant lists and list of Significant Trees and copied them to CD.

### **Show & Tell/Field Reports**

Lake Wendouree:

- John Gregurke: two Brolgas 21/11/06; on 28/11/06 only 12 swans remained down from 50 the previous week.
- Carol Hall: Patrick Guay, two students and personnel from DSE and the City and myself moved 2 of 3 families of swans from the Lake to Paul's Wetland and North Treatment Plant on 26/11/06.
- Claire Dalman: Native Flax flower where water would normally cover on west side of Durham Point.
- Peter Billing – Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills.

John Williams: Wombat Forest – Robins.

Paul Norquay: at Mt. Egerton, Blackbird collecting nesting material.

Les Hanrahan at Bungaree: 6 Pelicans, 25 Swans, Spoonbill and White-necked Heron on dam.

Tony Johns: at Donald in the Stuart Adams River Reserve, a number of Willie Wagtail and Mudlarks nests, one of each in use.

**Syllabus Item:** *BEN Activities* – Hedley Thomson. He was thanked by Peter Dalman.

## CALENDAR

### February

- Fri 2      *Water!* Paul Norquay , School of Horticulture SMB  
Sun 4      Cosgrave and Newlyn Reservoirs—depart Ballarat 2pm.  
Tea at St Georges Lake  
Tue 20      Committee meeting at John & Alison Williams, 20 Stewart St.  
7.30pm

### March

- Fri 2      AGM and members' Images—*Extreme Environments*  
Sun 4      Anglesea—Coast and heath

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<b>Supper Duty:</b>	Feb	Del McDonnell
	March:	?

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### Committee

President.....	Mr Peter Dalman
Vice-President.....	Mr Greg Binns
Secretary.....	Mrs Carol Hall
Treasurer .....	Mr Les Hanrahan
Miss Helen Burgess .....	Mrs Claire Dalman.....
Miss Maureen Christie .....	Mr John Williams .....
Mr John Gregurke .....	Mrs Alison Williams.....

**Correspondence:** PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

**Email:**

**Website:** [www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au](http://www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au) Click on Local Info. Search Environment

**Meetings** are held at Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

**Excursions:** Depart from Ballarat Market Place (formerly Creswick Plaza) Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.

A monthly publication of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.  
Incorporation # A0014919P    ABN 13 150 403 135